

EVERY BRILLIANT THING

IMPACT REPORT 2025



THEATRE
BY THE LAKE

THE CAST

Andy Turner | Narrator

CREATIVE TEAM

Liz Stevenson | Director

Alex Berry | Designer

Anne Timpson | Community Engagement Coordinator

Mark Melville | Composer / Sound Designer

Matt Leventhall | Lighting Designer

Phil Geller (in house) | Production Manager

Gemma Reeve (in house) | Costume Supervisor

Sarah Hughes | Casting Director

Emily Ford | Floor Illustrator

STAGE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Sophie Acreman (in house) | Company Stage Manager

Sara Cowman | Deputy Stage Manager

TBTL STAFF

Liz Stevenson | Artistic Director

Simon Stephens | Executive Director

Amy Clewes | Producer

Sophie Acreman | Company Manager

Phil Geller | Production & Technical Manager

Claire Dunk | Assistant Producer

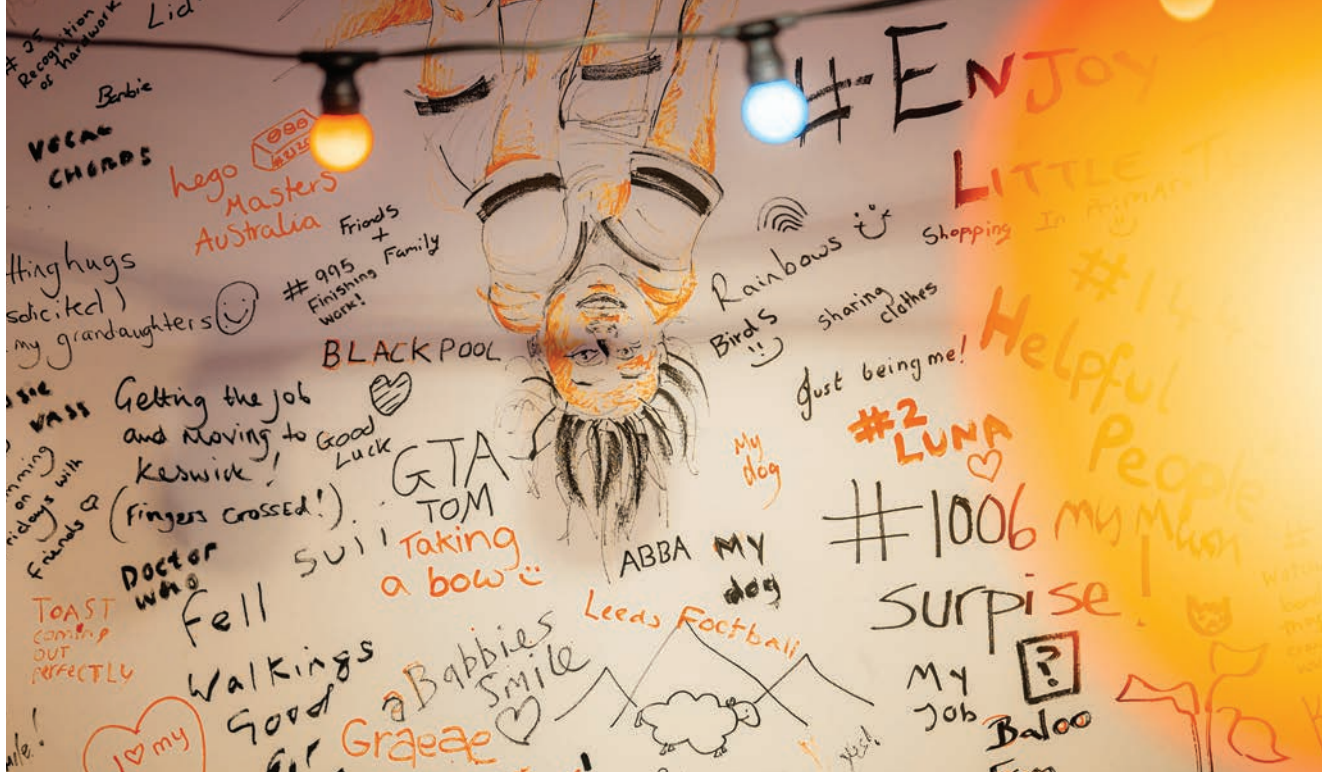
Josh Callaway | Chief LX

Nic Wharton | Stage Technician

Daymon Johnstone | Technician

Louis Ward | Technician





STEPPING FORWARD

Creating **Every Brilliant Thing** marked a great step forward for Theatre by the Lake. As Cumbria's only midscale producing theatre, we recognise we have the opportunity, ambition, and responsibility to elevate Cumbrian storytelling through original productions.

Every Brilliant Thing is that ambition in practice. We wanted to tackle a difficult subject, suicide and depression, through an uplifting, engaging and hopeful production, that both celebrates life and highlights the issue of high suicide rates in Cumbria.

Addressing themes relevant to our Cumbrian communities is a strategic focus, as is reaching audiences where they live. Through our new community touring model, we took the production to communities that face barriers to

accessing high-quality theatre and the arts due to a lack of provision, allowing us to engage them in conversations around the subject matter, with support from local partner charities.

Our learnings from **Every Brilliant Thing** speak to the transformative power of live theatre that resonates with people's experiences. We are convinced that by adopting this place-based approach and reducing barriers to access across the county, we are uniquely placed to serve our communities and elevate Cumbrian voices through storytelling.

Liz Stevenson

Artistic Director & Joint CEO,
Director of Every Brilliant Thing

Simon Stephens

Executive Director & Joint CEO

INTRODUCTION

In 2023, Theatre by the Lake [TBTL] presented **Every Brilliant Thing**, a poignant and hopeful play addressing the sensitive topics of suicide and depression. This production was particularly relevant to Cumbria, a region where suicide rates are 50% higher than the national average (Suicide Rates in England and Wales by Local Authority 2021). This report details the impact of this production and its associated activities, demonstrating TBTL's commitment to social impact, accessibility, and community engagement.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every Brilliant Thing positively impacted targeted communities within Cumbria by raising awareness of suicide and mental health, fostering crucial conversations, and strengthening community connections. Through innovative and collaborative partnerships, community outreach, and a focus on accessibility, **Every Brilliant Thing** exceeded expectations and established a model for future socially engaged work. Key achievements include reaching new, targeted audiences in rurally isolated locations, providing support for audiences through new strategic partnerships, and creating a legacy of understanding and open dialogue around suicide.





PROJECT AIMS

- Promote suicide awareness and wellbeing and support suicide-safer communities.
- Provide creative participation opportunities.
- Increase access to high-quality theatre for rural communities.
- Produce nationally acclaimed work as Cumbria's foremost producing theatre.
- Connect with community groups to amplify TBTL's impact and reach.
- Provide a space for local artist development.

KEY IMPACT & ACHIEVEMENTS

Performances

18 live performances at TBTL with **2,306** audience members. In addition, a 6-date rural tour with **556** audience members.

Training

2 suicide awareness training sessions for **16** TBTL staff and volunteers, and the Kirkgate Youth Theatre Managervolunteers; **2** Knit and Natter sessions with **21** participants. Man Club. community groups and **2** community workshops.

Partnerships

7 new partnerships developed with organisations including Every Life Matters, Papyrus, and Andy's Man Club. community groups and **2** community workshops.

School Engagement

Performances attended by **3** local secondary schools, plus **2** performances at Keswick School for **207** Year 10 students.

Exhibition

1397 contributions to the 'Brilliant Thing Exhibition' at TBTL, including photographs, audio recordings, and contributions from **6** community groups and **2** community workshops.

Artist Development

8 post-show Research & Development performances supporting local and national artists.

Community Support

54 discounted tickets provided to community organisations; dedicated breakout space with **21** partner organisation volunteers; **2** Knit and Natter sessions with **21** participants. Man Club. community groups and **2** community workshops.



PROJECT LEARNINGS

1. RURAL TOURING MODEL

A focus of the wider project around **Every Brilliant Thing** was increasing accessibility to high-quality live theatre in Cumbrian communities impacted by poor mental health and high suicide rates.

To achieve this, TBTL developed a rural touring model comprising a 6-show tour of rural locations across Cumbria, including in Millom, Ewanrigg, Kirkby Stephen, Grasmere, Arnside, and Keswick.

These performances were delivered in partnership with Highlights and Arts Out West and were supported by several suicide prevention and mental health charities, including Every Life Matters, Papyrus and Andy’s Man Club, allowing for audience support and signposting at all shows.

“IT’S A BRILLIANT THING, WHEN LIVE THEATRE LANDS IN THE MIDDLE OF A COMMUNITY AND RIPPLES AND RESONATES THROUGH EVERY AUDIENCE MEMBER CREATING A BOND OF UNFORGETTABLE COMEDY, UNDERSTANDING, AND HOPE AMONGST THOSE PRESENT... THE RELEVANCE AND QUALITY OF THE SHOW, POST-SHOW DISCUSSIONS, AND ASSOCIATED PARTNERSHIPS HAS RAISED THE ‘BAR’ FOR RURAL TOURING IN WEST CUMBRIA.”

- Kate Whitmarsh, The Centre in Ewanrigg

2. WRAP-AROUND ACTIVITIES

Every Brilliant Thing provided an opportunity for TBTL to establish new, strategic partnerships with organisations who specialise in suicide prevention and mental health. Audiences were given the opportunity to partake in a variety of associated activities, helping them explore mental health and suicide in supportive environments that encouraged open dialogue and understanding.

“IT TOOK MY BREATH AWAY TO SEE EVERY INCH OF THE THEATRE BUILDING INTEGRATED INTO THE PRODUCTION. SO IMMERSIVE”

- Audience member

“It was the best use of the theatre space in recent times, mesmerising and very effective links to the production. Enhanced the whole experience” - Audience member



Some of these activities fed directly into the ‘What’s Your Brilliant Thing?’ exhibition, which was curated and designed by the show’s Set and Costume Designer, Alex Berry. It provided a fun, interactive space that focused on brilliant and joyous things. Audience members were actively encouraged to share their brilliant things by writing directly on the walls of the theatre, which also allowed them to listen, view and read brilliant things contributed by others.

This provided an innovative and interactive space for reflection and conversation, extending the project’s impact beyond the performances and transforming TBTL’s approach to audience engagement.

Suicide awareness training empowered staff and volunteers to provide support and signposting, enhancing TBTL’s capacity to advocate for mental health awareness.

Performances and workshops in schools sparked important conversations about mental health among young people and provided opportunities for further personal and social development work.

Pupil feedback included:

“It made me think about how struggling with mental health can also effect those around you”

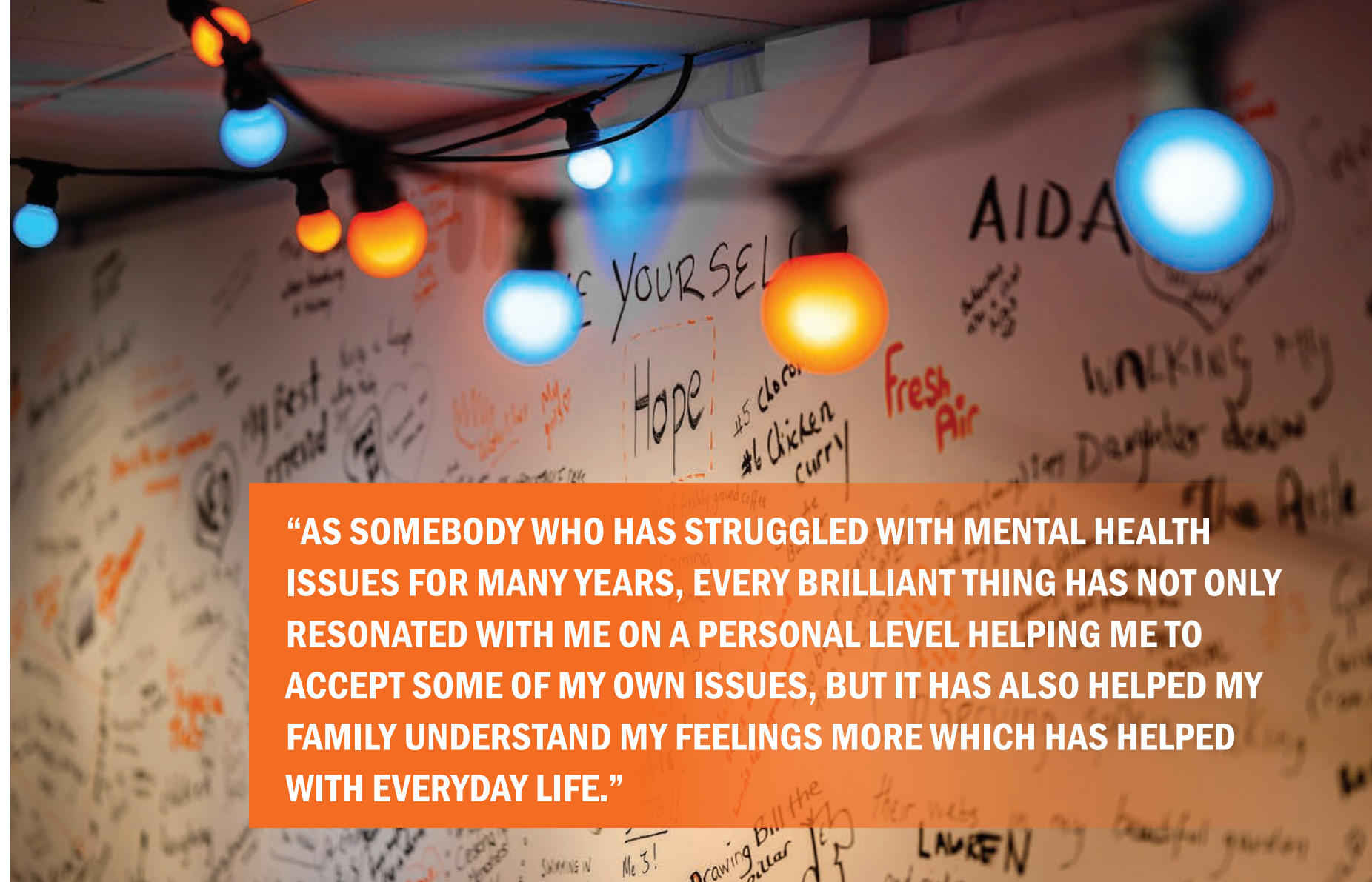
“Brings attention to an important message”

“I liked that the show wasn’t afraid to talk about very sensitive issues.”

3. PLACE-BASED APPROACH

TBTL is committed to exploring Cumbrian social issues and addressing their root causes. Rural isolation and social deprivation are underlying factors that impact mental health and are prevalent in Cumbria, both of which impact access and engagement with arts and cultural opportunities.

Every Brilliant Thing broadened TBTL's reach, attracting new audiences (33% increase in attendance from those "not typically engaged in arts and culture"), whilst providing a safe space to engage with challenging themes. Audience feedback highlighted the production's personal resonance and its role in fostering understanding within Cumbrian communities.



"AS SOMEBODY WHO HAS STRUGGLED WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES FOR MANY YEARS, EVERY BRILLIANT THING HAS NOT ONLY RESONATED WITH ME ON A PERSONAL LEVEL HELPING ME TO ACCEPT SOME OF MY OWN ISSUES, BUT IT HAS ALSO HELPED MY FAMILY UNDERSTAND MY FEELINGS MORE WHICH HAS HELPED WITH EVERYDAY LIFE."



"THEATRE BY THE LAKE IS SPREADING THE MESSAGE THAT MENTAL HEALTH IS NOT A TABOO SUBJECT."

- Audience member



With thanks to our partner organisations for **Every Brilliant Thing**:

- Every Life Matters
- Andy's Man Club
- Papyrus
- Always Another Way
- Healthy Hopes
- I Can
- Happy Mum's Foundation

To support Theatre by the Lake produce more original Cumbrian productions like **Every Brilliant Thing**, please email development@theatrebythelake.com

CONCLUSION

Every Brilliant Thing stands as a testament to the power of theatre to address critical social issues and create positive change. Employing a community touring model was an effective way to increase TBTL's impact and reach across Cumbria, engaging new communities and those facing barriers to accessing professional theatre and the arts. Through its commitment to positive social impact, collaboration, and legacy, TBTL will continue to grow community engagement through socially relevant productions and community touring, building on the success of **Every Brilliant Thing**.





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